TECHNICAL DATA

Title BREAKING THE WAVES
Original Title BREAKING THE WAVES
Director Lars von Trier
Script Lars von Trier (David Pirie & Peter Asmussen)
Producers Vibeke Windeløv, Peter Aalbæk-Jensen
Year of Production 1996
Cast Emily Watson, Stellan Skarsgård, Katrin Cartlidge, Jean-Marc Barr
Genre Drama
Duration 158 min
Format 35mm
Screen Ratio 1:2.35 cinemascope
Sound Dolby SRD
Language English
Country of Origin Denmark
Danish release July 1996
Production company Zentropa Entertainment

WORLD SALES

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SYNOPSIS

Set in the early 1970's amid a small tightly-knit community on the remote north coast of Scotland, BREAKING THE WAVES tells the story of Bess, a young, naive and innocent girl and her profound experience of love. Bess, who has lived her life protected by her family: her mother, grandmother and recently widowed sister-in-law Dodo; within the confined world of strict Calvinism, falls in love with Jan, a seafarer who has lost his arm and is deeply in love with a small girl who is always ready to sacrifice herself to help others.

For a brief and happy time the newly-weds describe the events, encouraging her to believe that her actions are helping Jan's health can be affected by her conduct and in her innocence she spirals into a world she does not understand.

Denied the support of her community, Bess is abandoned and exiled. However, believing that her actions are helping her beloved Jan, she calls on her strength of conviction and ignores her own safety in the hope that a miracle will give Jan back to her. She plunges into the ultimate sacrifice, wishing to risk her life for him, abandoning and their love for one another.

Lars von Trier – Biography

Lars von Trier is born in 1956 and graduated from The Danish Film School in 1983. Lars von Trier is without a doubt the director who has contributed most to the renewal of Danish film and he has had a great impact on the new 1990's generation, not least because of his central role in Dogme 95. Also internationally he is among directors who has drawn attention to Danish film. His cinematic work ranges from avant garde films to innovative explorations of some of the classical film genres.

His earliest short films were stylistically inventive explorations of themes and symbols which would later play a central role in his feature films and von Trier developed a mode of cinematic expression that was heavily symbolic and emotion-laden.

Nationally and internationally Lars von Trier established himself with The Europe Trilogy. The Trilogy illuminates the traumas of Europe in the future and it is now situated in Filmbyen outside of Copenhagen. Lars von Trier made two TV productions MEDEA 1988 and THE TEACHERS' ROOM in 1994 but with THE KINGDOM I (1994) and KINGDOM II (1997) both co-directed with Arnfred, Trier realised that the technical style is less important for the audience than story and characters. It was an insight that would later direct him to the Dogme concept. The series are shot mostly with a hand-held camera, ignoring the usual rules of lighting and continuity editing resulting in distorted colours and grainy pictures. But it became Trier's first huge popular success.

With the Danish and international interest for THE KINGDOM it was now possible for Trier and his producers Peter Aalbæk Jensen and Vibke Winding to find funding for his next big project.

The second trilogy, The Goldenheart Trilogy, was inspired by a sentimental children's book from Lars von Trier's childhood about a small girl who is always ready to sacrifice herself to help others.

The trilogy consists of:
1996 BREAKING THE WAVES (Grand Prix, Cannes Film Festival)
1998 THE IDIOTS (Dogme)
2000 DANCER IN THE DARK (Golden Palms, Cannes 2000)

In 1995 Trier presented the so-called Dogme 95 Manifesto with its Vow of Charity that sets up 10 rules for filmmaking. The Manifesto was signed by Lars von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg (FESTEN – Jury Special Prize in Cannes), Søren Kragh-Jacobsen (MIFUNES – Silver Bear, Berlin) and Kristian Levring (THE KING IS ALIVE – Certain Regard Cannes Film Festival) forming a Dogme brotherhood.

Lars von Trier is currently working on his third trilogy USA.

The first film DOGVILLE starring Nicole Kidman, Paul Bettany, Lauren Bacall, Stellan Skarsgard, Ben Gazzara, Harriet Anderson and James Caan, was shot in Sweden in January and February 2002 and is now in post-production in Filmbyen. Expected release summer 2003.

In 2006 Lars von Trier will add another dimension to his career as he will be directing “Das Ring Des Nibelung” by Richard Wagner at the Bayreuth Festspiele in Germany. Pre-production for this opera has already begun.